

## [Dead End Kids]

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FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Fred Romanofsky

ADDRESS 8640 Bay Parkway, c/o Segal, Brooklyn

DATE December 15, 1938

SUBJECT DEAD END KIDS (Life on the East Side)

1. Date and time of interview December 12th between the hours of 5 to 7 P.M.
2. Place of interview Street corner at 9th and Avenue C, 11th and Avenue C
3. Name and address of informant Children of the neighborhood. The singer of the song "Johnny & Billy" was George [Poohepka?] of 336 E. 5th St., NYC
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Streets

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FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Fred Romanofsky

ADDRESS 8640 Bay Parkway, c/o Segal, Brooklyn

DATE December 15, 1938

SUBJECT DEAD END KIDS (Life on the East Side)

1. Ancestry Polish, Ukranian, Russian, Czechoslovakian, Italian and Jewish
2. Place and date of birth New York City in most cases
3. Family Working class: wage earners: "One-third of a nation" type
4. Places lived in, with dates NYC
5. Education, with dates Primary grades, high school, backward children's classes
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Most of them have at one time or another worked at various trades as "helpers" or shoeshine boys and newsboys.
7. Special skills and interests Sports, weird tales, etc.
8. Community and religious activities Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Jewish

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9. Description of informant Boys between the ages of 9 to 15 years old. Many of these boys were inadequately clothed and many appeared undernourished.

10. Other Points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Fred Romanofsky

ADDRESS 8640 Bay Parkway, c/o Segal, Brooklyn

DATE December 15, 1938

SUBJECT DEAD END KIDS (Life on the East Side)

"Getta herrari here. Whatchou stay here for? You don't live on this block, but all time you stay here. Don't make faces at me - the God will strike you over the mouth - you bad boys! You won't come to no good. See, see Mister! Look for yourself! This is a cibilized country and they act like crazy. They are crazy. If you let them do like they want, there would be upside down everything. See the windows on that house - all broke so the rain come in. They done it with stones. They got no heart. They kill you and laugh. Bad all the time. They cut your kidney. They cut your heart. They take out liver and the stomach and laugh at you - just like nothing. What that why? You Americans think they all nice and play all time and not go to work like in old country. Good. What is the use? My boy eleven years next month. Some mothers no watch their boys like I do; they come home almost twelve o'clock at night time and the boys do like they want. That boy over there - no good since

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that high. See 2 the way they pile on top in pile on dirty sidewalk full of spit. They catch sickness like that and shake the germs in the kitchen. Motherrr work all night and the boys tear pants. It's no good. They go to school not play hooky at the river. That's why they all are crooks. We look for that boy once three hours. His mother worry maybe he drown in the garbage river. No. He play hooky. That's not of your business what I say to this man. Go on lady don't bother us. Nosey. Their play days are over: they should go to school and get educationed. My boy not like them. This boy come from nice family. His father work. He not too bad. Sometime they shoot craps and steal milk bottles and sody bottles from trucks and sell them. Where else can they get money? The father and motherrr happy to get rid of children they so tired from work and all the boys come here like flies from all over. What's the matter with the playgrounds? Maybe not too much place for all, but act like nice boys there. I stay too long, I better see my supper don't burn. I tell you plenty about boys so you don't think they all bad. Sometimes like before they make me mad, maybe, I say too much Goodbye Mister."

"Ow, don't mind her. She tawks but she's alright. Sometimes she goes haywire. We pay taxes, don't we? We can't stay here and we can't stay here. She said we oughter go to school but I don't like it. You don't learn nuttin' there. I can't read or write and I'm thirteen years old. I ain't dumb, but they put me in a slow class three years ago when I was in 3 B and I gotta stay there till I'm seventeen. Then they throw me out. It's an industrial class like.

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What's the use of going to school. If you learn nuttin' there? better go to work."

"Hey, Nitt, why do you have to go to school?"

"Cause the school won't come to me."

"You wanna know how we live? Why don't you ask the "Dead End Kids?" They're fakes! Two to one they go back to Hollywood but not alive if they visited here just for a while Just-

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a-while! Sissys! You wanna hear a story? O.K. Mike! Hey Mike! He's the best story teller on the block - surprising for his age. Tell him the story of the "Green Hands.." It's good. Shut up, you guys!"

"Once a man played an organ and as he played suddently somebody crept up behind him and stuck a six inch blade into him - all from behind. The organ grinder cried out and grabbed his throat. (Illustrates) Then they buried him in a coffin and buried the coffin. That nite the dead man's hands turned green in the coffin and at midnight they walked out of the grave. Two policemen were walking on the street when suddently one of them felt something scratching his leg. He looked down and screamed when he saw the green hands. He run, but the green hands run after him an grab him by the throat and chocked him just like that (illustrated with a twitch of the face and turn of the neck). Then the green hands walked into a lady's room just as she was undressing. They grabbed her by the throat and squeezed her till she fell like a sack. Then they swam out to a ship... etc."

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The story continues on and on for over thirty minutes with the green hands murdering all people that come within reach. The climax comes when the green hands are trapped in a hotel where a fire breaks out and the green hands turn to ashes. Throughout the length of the narrative, the group of about thirty boys kept silent and listened avidly to every syllable and closely followed the mimicry of the story teller. Their faces registered the horror of each crime - as if they themselves were eye witness to the crimes of the "green hands". The story teller felt the spell that he was casting over them and drew the story out a little bit by putting "new" victims within reach of the "green hands".

"You manna hear some songs? The dirty kind?" Hei ho! Hei ho! To Hollywood we go, To see Mae West and all the rest. Hei ho! Hei ho! Me and my friend Toni We come from Italy. We drink the booze And shine the shoes Me and my friend Toni. 5 We are the boys of 11th street That you hear so much about People hide their pocketbooks Whenever they go out. We're noted for our dirty work Most everything we do. All the copers hate us And

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we hope you hate us too. Hei ho! Hei Ho! It's off to the burlesque we go We sit and stare at the girls bare Hei ho! Hei ho! One day I saw something in the grass It was Mussolini with Hitler in his ass. In 1492 Columbus was a Jew He sat on the grass And tickled his ass - In 1493. Tammany, Tammany Hookus pocus Kiss my tocus Tam-m-a-n-y! 6 A richman takes a taxi cab A poorman takes a train A hobo walks the railroad track But gets there just the same. Johny and Billy went out for a walk One Sunday afternoon Johny said to Billy "Do you manna have a fight?" And then the boys threw stones. Johny took out his little white knife And found the edge was sharpened. He stuck it into Billy's heart And blood came pouring after. "If mother asks you where I am? Tell her I am dying. Six little angels at my side Two to watch Two to pray And two to carry my soul away." Johnson, Johnson is my name Brooklyn is my station Heaven is my resting place God is my salvation!" 7 Hoover blew the whistle Mellon rang the bell Wall Street gave the signal And the country went to Hell!